

Report 2666



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Archaeological Watching Brief at All Saints' Church, Tibenham, Norfolk

ENF126860

Prepared for

Tibenham Parochial Church Council
c/o Birdsall Swash and Blackman
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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Tibenham Parochial Church Council ahead of remedial works on the church's roof and drainage system.

Twenty-one trenches comprising gullies, soakaways and inspection pits were dug to the north and south of the church and along the path around the south of the building, linking downpipes from the church roof to a new drainage system.

Four burials and two re-burials were disturbed during these works. No other archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

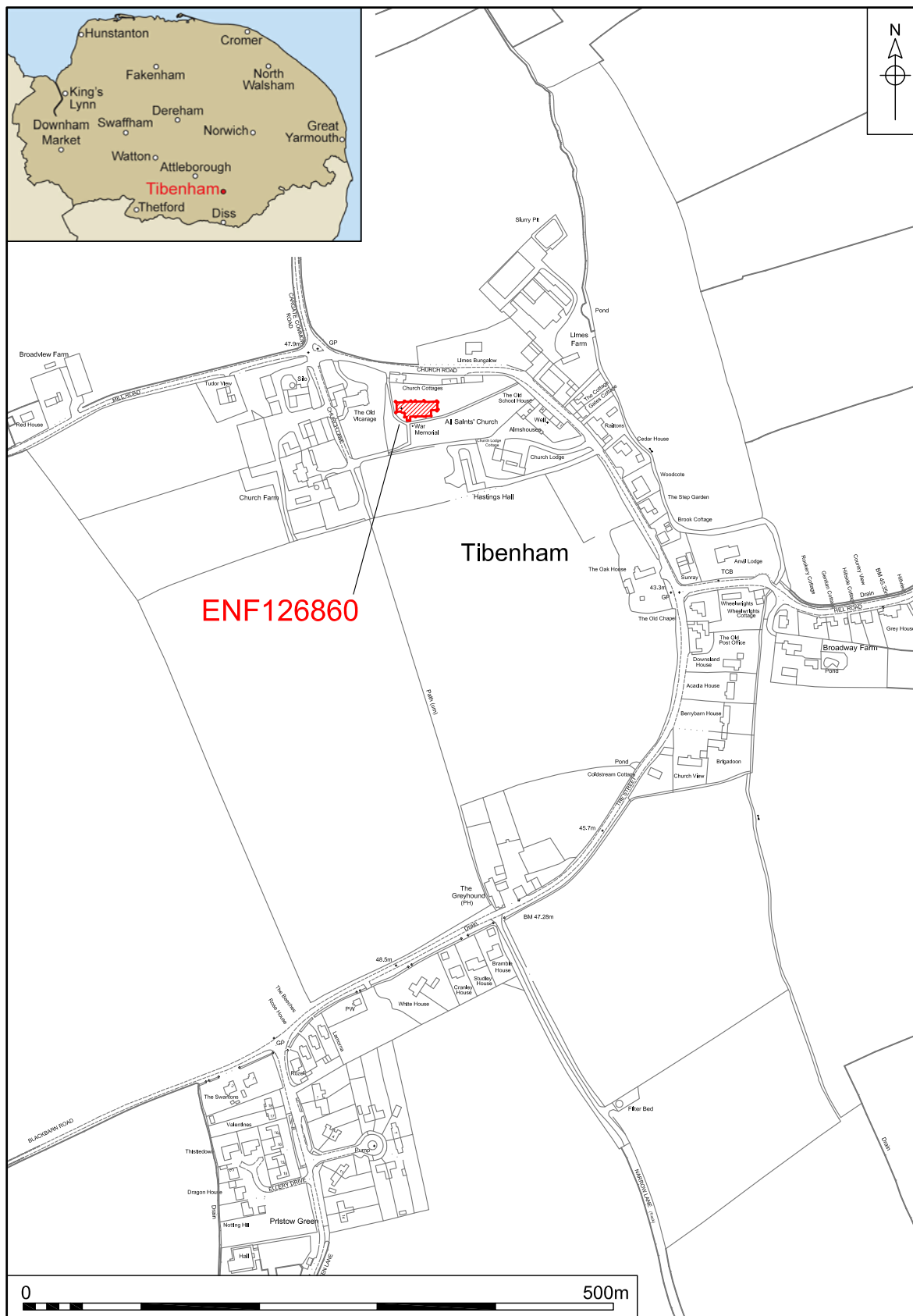
1.0 INTRODUCTION

All Saints' Church is located on a hill overlooking Church Road in the small village of Tibenham. The church required a new drainage system, ahead of remedial works to the roof. This required a series of trenches and pits to be dug around the perimeter of the church, through the graveyard and along the pathway to the church entrance (Fig. 1). Because of the nature of the site and the high probability that human burials would be encountered during these works a programme of archaeological monitoring was required.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (Ref. 3PL/2010/1319/F) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. CNF43179). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NPSA/BAU2666/DW). This work was commissioned by Birdsall Swash & Blackman and funded by Tibenham Parish Church Council.

This programme of work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010).

The site archive is currently held by NPS Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The village of Tibenham is sited on a bedrock of chalk with superficial deposits of clay, silts, sand and gravel (www.bgs.ac.uk).

The site itself is located on top of a hill overlooking Church Road and is very well drained.

The topsoil on the site is a layer of dark grey silty sand of loose compaction, covered in a rough turf. The graveyard deposit on the north side of the church consists of firm compacted mixed pale brown clay with chalk lumps, a high amount of flint nodules and occasional red brick pieces and the occasional piece of disarticulated human bone. On the south side of the church the graveyard deposit is a dark grey silty sand, again containing small lumps of chalk, red brick fragments and the occasional piece of disarticulated human bone. These deposits indicate that there has been activity at the site, notably burial and reburial of human remains, as well as construction work at the church and possible landscaping.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The church of All Saints at Tibenham is a Grade I listed building of architectural interest. The earliest feature in the building is an 11th-century Norman window in the north wall of the Nave. The Chancel is thought to date from the 13th century, with the south aisle of the church being added sometime in the 14th century. The church's tower, thought to be unusually large for the period and for a parish church in such a small village, is very impressive with its own stair turret and battlements with evangelists for pinnacles (Plate 1). Both the tower and the church's porch are believed to have been added sometime in the 15th century. The entire church is built from flint rubble with stone dressings and a roof of slate and lead (www.english-heritage.org.uk).

One of the most notable features inside the church is the Buxton Pew, one of only a few examples of raised family pews in Norfolk, and unique because rather than being built over a family vault, it is possible to actually walk beneath it. Located in the south aisle, it is believed to have been built in the early 17th century and it has been suggested that its purpose was to accommodate the family's servants rather than the family itself (www.norfolkchurches.co.uk).

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) has been consulted and a few notable finds have been recorded within the vicinity of All Saints' Church in Tibenham. Most of the finds have been found during fieldwalking and metal detecting exercises. An Iron Age Durotrigan coin was discovered in a field north-west of the church, and may indicate links between this area and south-western Britain (the Durotriges lived in the area now occupied by Dorset, south Wiltshire and south Somerset). A Roman coin (a Follis of Carasius) dating between 287 and 293 AD was discovered in the field directly north of the churchyard on the opposite side of Church Road. Fieldwalking and metal detecting in a field slightly further north-west of the church between 1981 and 2004 produced a large number of finds including a prehistoric pot boiler (burnt flint) and Neolithic flintwork along with pottery sherds and metal work from Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, medieval and post-

medieval periods – showing that the area around Tibenham has enjoyed a long and varied human activity.



Plate 1. The church tower and porch

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to monitor excavated trenches and holes (Fig. 2) and to record any archaeological remains exposed during the works and to report on any such remains surviving within the development area.

The Brief required that all excavations in the churchyard be monitored by an experienced archaeologist.

Machine excavations were carried out with a tracked mini hydraulic 360° excavator equipped with a 0.40m toothed bucket and operated under constant archaeological supervision.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection. Except for any human remains encountered during the works, which were recorded, removed from the trenches and stored in the church for reburial at the Rector's convenience.

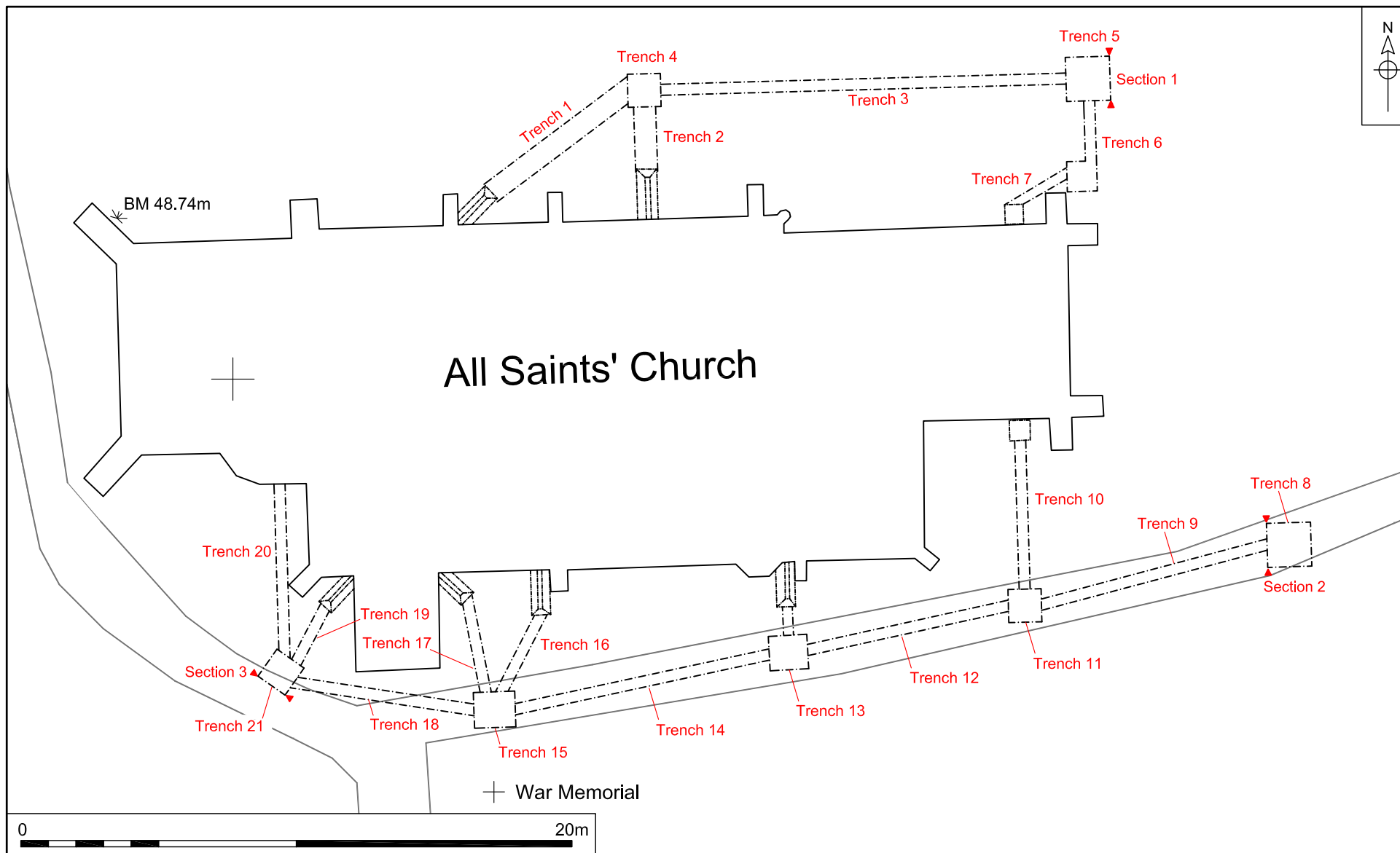


Figure 2. Trench location. Scale 1:200

No environmental samples were taken, because no suitable deposits were encountered.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. Monochrome and digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits where appropriate.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 48.74m OD, located on the side of the church itself.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 RESULTS

Trenches 1 and 2 (Plates 2 and 3) were approximately 0.80m wide and 0.80m deep and were excavated to connect the downpipes from the church roof to the new catchment pit (Trench 4). No archaeological features or deposits were encountered and no finds were recovered.



Plate 2. Trench 1



Plate 3. Trench 2



Plate 4. Trench 3

Trench 3 (Plate 4) was an east-west gully roughly 0.40m wide, excavated to connect the catchment pit to the new large soakaway (Trench 5). No archaeological features or deposits were encountered; however a small fragment of ceramic building material was recovered from graveyard deposit [4].



Plate 5. Trench 4



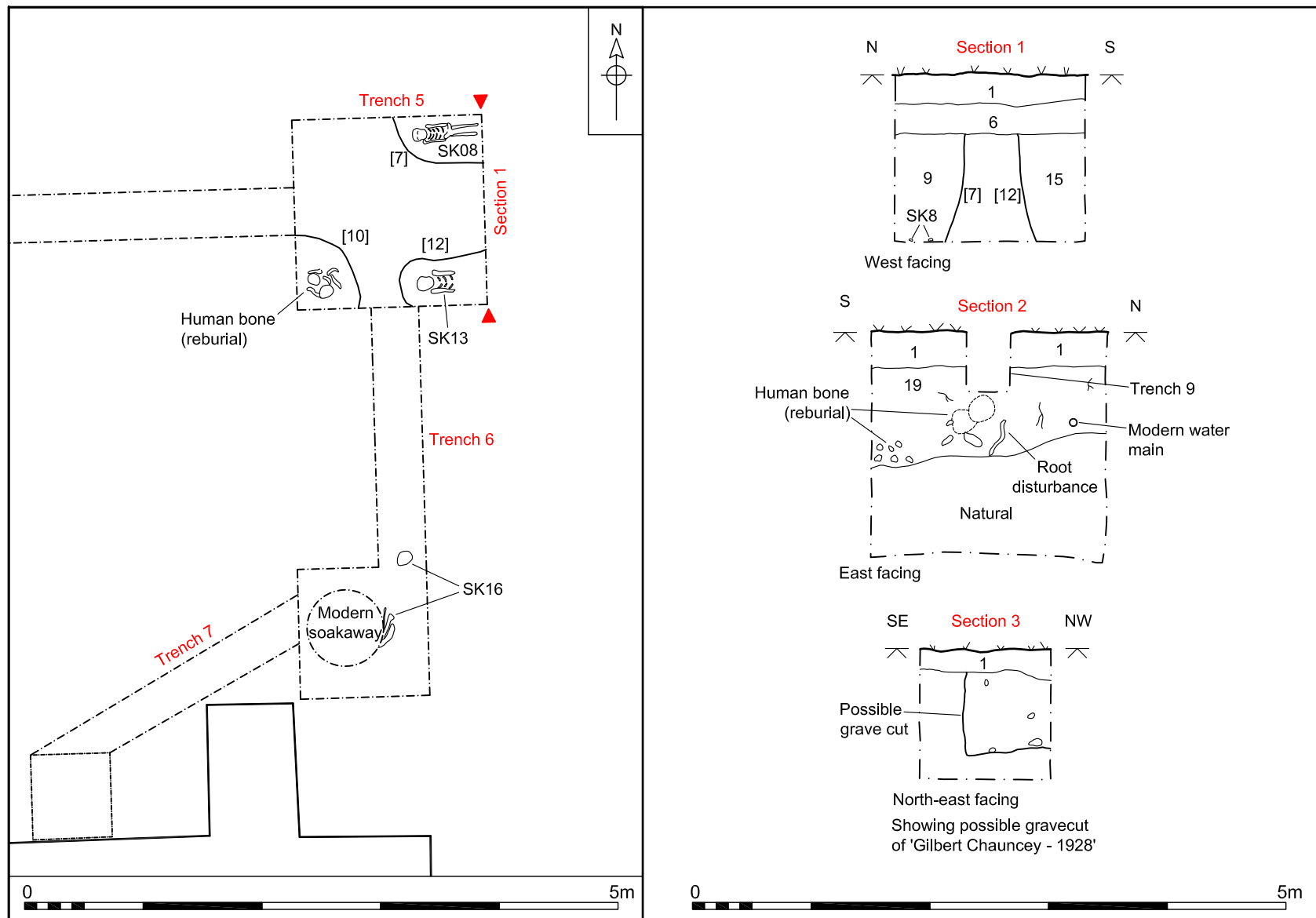
Plate 6. Trench 5



Plate 7. Trench 6 (showing old soakaway)



Plate 8. Trench 6



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Figure 3. Plan of features within Trenches 5 and 6 and sections 1-3. Scale 1:50

Catchment pit Trench 4 (Plate 5) measured 1.20m by 1.20m and was 1.20m deep. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

Trench 5 (Plate 6) was the one of two large new soakaways required for the new drainage system and measured 1.60m by 1.60m and was dug to a depth of 1.80m. At around 1.45m deep three features were encountered, all of which were grave cuts (Fig. 3).

Grave cuts [7] and [12] orientated east-west and containing adult remains were clearly visible in the eastern side of the trench. The third grave cut contained the remains of several disarticulated human skeletons [10].

One fragment of 18th- to 19th-century roof tile and one animal bone was recovered from graveyard deposit [6].

Trench 6 was excavated to link the downpipe from the far north-eastern corner of the church to the new soakaway, and also revealed an old soakaway from the original drainage system. This soakaway looked rather like a small well; it was round, approximately 0.50m in diameter and constructed of red and yellow bricks with a round cap (Plate 7). When this earlier drainage system was put in place, it evidently disturbed at least one burial, part of which still remained in this trench, represented by a disarticulated skull and a few limb bones (SK16), but no grave cut could be identified (Fig. 3 and Plates 8 and 9). The trench was originally 0.40m wide, 0.55m deep and 2m long but was subsequently extended to 1m square to reveal the full extent of the old soakaway.



Plate 9. Trench 6

Trench 7 (Plate 10) was an additional trench excavated to locate a drain pipe that had emptied into the old soakaway. This trench was approximately 1.50m long, 0.40m wide and 0.50m deep. One disarticulated human bone fragment was recovered from graveyard deposit [18]. The graveyard deposit here was a dark-

grey silty-sand with frequent flint nodules, chalk pieces, red brick and tile pieces indicating that this area has been highly disturbed by the earlier drainage works.



Plate 10. Trench 7

Trench 8 (Plate 11) was dug on the south-east side of the church to insert the second of the two new soakaways. The trench measured 1.60m by 1.60m square, and was excavated to a depth of 1.90m. Reburial of several individuals was identified within graveyard deposit [19] in this trench however; the graveyard deposit was of such a highly mixed and disturbed nature that no cut for this reburial could be identified (Fig. 3, Section 2). Beneath this deposit appeared to be a single grave containing the articulated bones of one adult (SK20) at approximately 1.40m deep, prone and orientated east-west (Plate 12). The remains were poorly preserved and no grave cut could be identified.

It was considered unsafe to enter the trench so the skeletal remains were recorded from the surface and lifted by machine.

On the north side of Trench 8 a modern water pipe was uncovered but no cut could be identified.

One metal object was recovered from the graveyard deposit [19].



Plate 11. Trench 8



Plate 12. Human remains (SK20)

Trench 9 (Plate 13) was excavated to connect drains on the south side of the church to catchment pit Trench 8 (Fig. 2). This trench was 0.40m wide and excavated to a depth of 0.50m. Here, on the church pathway, the topsoil consists of a thin layer of rough grass over 0.10m of gravel and the graveyard deposit is a dark silty-sand layer of soft compaction.

A couple of fragments of human bone were recovered from the graveyard deposit [21].



Plate 13. Trench 9

Trench 10 (Plate 14) was excavated to connect the downpipe on the south-eastern side of the church to catchment pit Trench 11. It was 0.40m wide, 0.50m deep and approximately 5m long.

This trench ran between two rows of three headstones, so the potential that human remains may be disturbed here was very high. However as the trench was fairly shallow no features were encountered and no remains were affected.

One pottery sherd and one glass object were recovered from deposit [22].



Plate 14. Trench 10

Trench 11 was a catchment pit (Plate 15) which measured 1.20m x 1.20m square and was 0.70m deep.

No archaeological deposits or features were encountered, and only one metal object, possible a piece of coffin furniture, was recovered from the deposit [23].



Plate 15. Trench 11

Trench 12 was a gully excavated through the path on the south of the church to link the two catchment pits Trenches 11 and 13) (Fig. 2). Trench 12 measured 0.40m wide, 0.50m deep, and approximately 7m long.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

Trench 13 represents another catchment pit and a very short gully leading from a downpipe on the south side of the church (Fig. 2, Plate 16). The catchment pit measured 1.25m x 1.40m and was excavated to a depth of 0.80m.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.



Plate 16. Trench 13



Plate 17. Trenches 14, 15, 16 and 17

Trench 14 was a gully excavated along the pathway to link catchment pits Trenches 13 and 15 (Fig. 2) and measured 0.40m wide, 9m long and 0.50m deep.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

Trench 15 (Fig. 2, Plate 17) was a catchment pit located on the church path, south-east of the church porch. It measured 1.50m by 1.30m and was excavated to a depth of 1.30m.

During excavation the disarticulated and fragmented remains of two individuals were found. It was clear from the skulls that one was an adult and one was a child, however, it was not possible to see a grave cut and the bones appeared to have come from the deposit [25].

Trenches 16 and 17 were both short gullies running from downpipes on the south side of the church into catchment pit Trench 15 (Fig. 2, Plate 17). They were approximately 0.40m wide, 3.80m long and 0.80m deep.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.

Trench 18 was a small gully measuring approximately 0.42m wide, 5.70m long and 0.70m deep linking catchment pits Trench 15 and Trench 21 across the front of the church porch (Plate 18). The graveyard deposit was a little different here, although it was a fairly loose dark silty-sand but with frequent flint nodules and large red brick pieces.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.



Plate 18. Trench 18

Trenches 19 and 20 were two short gullies from the south of the church and the east of the porch to catchment pit Trench 21 (Fig. 2, Plate 19) and were approximately 0.40m wide and 0.70m deep. The area was highly disturbed by roots from the small tree that was removed prior to excavation.

No archaeological features or deposits were encountered.



Plate 19. Trenches 19 and 20

Trench 21 was the catchment pit located on the south-west side of the church opposite the tower (Fig. 2, Plate 20). It measured 1.20m by 1.20m and was excavated to a depth of 1.10m.

Some fragments of human bone was recovered from the graveyard deposit and one possible grave cut could be seen (Fig. 3 Section 3). It is possible that this grave may have been that of the burial associated of Gilbert Chauncey who died in 1928 and whose headstone was located close by (Plate 21).



Plate 20. Trench 21



Plate 21. Gravestone of Gilbert Chauncey

6.0 FINDS

by Lucy Talbot

The finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and an Excel spreadsheet was produced outlining broad dating. Each material type has been considered separately and is described below in date order. A list of finds in context order can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Pottery

Four sherds of pottery weighing 65g were collected from four contexts. The assemblage was recorded by count and weight and fabrics and forms identified (Jennings 1981)

6.1.1 Late Saxon

A single body sherd of 10th- to 11th-century Thetford type ware (THET), weighing 8g was recovered from graveyard deposit, context [22]. The form is undiagnostic.

6.1.2 Post-medieval

Three sherds of pottery of 16th- to 20th-century date, weighing 57g were also recovered. The assemblage consists of a base fragment of 16th- to 18th-century Glazed Red Earthenware (GRE) storage jar or bowl from context [26], the body sherd of an 18th- to 19th-century Late Slipped Redware storage vessel (LSRW), although it is most likely of 19th-century date (S Anderson pers. comm.) and an 18th- to 20th-century blue and white Transfer Printed Ware (TPW) plate or dish rim.

6.2 Ceramic Building Material

Four fragments of 18th- to 19th-century ceramic building material weighing 148g were collected from graveyard deposit deposits. Deposits [6], [18] and [26] each produced a piece of orange, medium sandy, flat roof tile, weighing a total of 144g, along with a fragment of dark orange, medium sandy brick from deposit [4], weighing 4g.

6.3 Glass

Two examples of glass were recovered from the site, weighing a total of 151g.

6.3.1 Late medieval/ Post-medieval

A shard of late medieval/early post medieval window glass was recovered from context [26]. Of dark green/brown colour, the fragment shows iridescence on all surfaces (indicative of oxidisation). Three edges are broken whilst one is grozed (a method of shaping window glass). No traces of painted decoration are present.

6.3.2 Modern

A clear glass jar of modern date, weighing 150g, was collected from context (22). Identified as a Shippam's meat/fish paste jar; it has been recorded and because of its relatively modern date, subsequently discarded.

6.4 Flint

A single flint flake was recovered, weighing 2g. With no working and the remains of cortex around the striking platform, a date for this object cannot be established.

6.5 Iron

6.5.1 Saxon

Context [19] produced a single iron, whittle tang, knife blade, weighing 22g. At 110mm long and 23mm, at its widest point, the form has been classified as C1, a Late Saxon (10th to 11th century) straight/horizontal backed blade, curving down to the tip, (Ottaway 1992).

6.5.2 Unknown

An iron object weighing 130g was recovered from context [23]. Consisting of a flat plate, pierced by an iron nail, and then developing into a curved, sub-square arm, broken at one end; this artefact, owing to its location within a churchyard, suggests it is possibly some form of coffin furniture.

6.6 Lead

A single fragment of lead strip, weighing 16g, was collected from context [2]. This undated strip is likely to be a scrap of roofing material.

6.7 Animal Bone

Context [6] produced two pieces of animal bone, weighing 64g. Although the remains show no signs of skinning or butchering, they in all likelihood represent food waste.

6.8 Human Skeletal Remains

A single small fragment of unidentified but possibly human bone weighing 5g was recovered from context [18]. This fragment shows evidence of immaturity owing to the presence of a ridge of un-fused bone along one edge.

6.9 Finds Conclusions

All of the finds recovered during the watching brief were derived from unstratified contexts within graveyard deposits within the churchyard. With the exception of the iron knife blade and the sherd of Thetford-ware pottery (both of which are of 10th- to 11th-century date and indicate Saxon activity) the assemblage represents a typical post-medieval assemblage from rural Norfolk.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

The only archaeological features and deposits that were encountered during these works were those that would have been expected to be present in a church graveyard i.e. grave cuts where the ground had been disturbed during the process of burial, articulated burials and disarticulated human bone.

It is possible that the unmarked graves of the individuals present in Trench 5 may have once been marked by headstones that have since been removed. The

removal and relocation of headstones after a long period has passed is a common practice in some graveyards.

It is likely that the disarticulated human remains encountered represented reburial of individuals' disarticulated remains whose graves had been disturbed during previous burial of other individuals and in some cases drainage works on the site (e.g. the burial in Trench 6 which had been disturbed by the insertion of an earlier soakaway).

At first it might seem surprising to encounter a burial underneath a path through the churchyard, such as the one seen in Trench 8, because there is a tendency to think that such routes 'have always been there' and there is a modern feeling of unease about walking over graves. However, routeways through churchyards can change and it has been suggested that the idea of being buried directly under your fellow worshipper's feet was once popular (Rev. Tim Thompson, pers. comm.).

Although no evidence was encountered in the excavated trenches for any earlier structure at the site of All Saints' Church at Tibenham, it is feasible that one may have existed. The finds from these works certainly suggest that there was human activity on the site before the medieval church was built.

Acknowledgements

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The finds were washed, recorded and analysed by Lucy Talbot.

The report was edited by Jayne Bown and illustrated and produced by David Dobson.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period	Notes
1	Deposit			Topsoil	Modern	Site wide
2	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 1
3	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 2
4	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 3
5	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (catchment pit)	-	Trench 4
6	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (soakaway)	-	Trench 5
7	Cut	Grave cut			-	Trench 5
8	Skeleton			Adult burial	-	Trench 5
9	Deposit		[7]		-	Trench 5
10	Cut	Grave cut		(re-burial of several individuals)	-	Trench 5
11	Deposit		[10]		-	Trench 5
12	Cut	Grave cut			-	Trench 5
13	Skeleton			Adult burial	-	Trench 5
14	Deposit		[12]		-	Trench 5
15	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 6
16	Skeleton			Adult burial	-	Trench 6
17	Masonry			Yellow/red brick soakaway	Modern	Trench 6
18	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 7
19	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (soakaway)	-	Trench 8
20	Skeleton			Adult burial	-	Trench 8
21	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 9
22	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 10
23	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (catchment pit)	-	Trench 11
24	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (catchment pit)	-	Trench 13
25	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (catchment pit)	-	Trench 15
26	Deposit			Graveyard deposit	-	Trench 18
27	Deposit			Graveyard deposit (catchment pit)	-	Trench 21

Appendix 1b: OASIS Feature Summary

Period	Feature	Total
Modern	soakaway	1
	Grave cut	3
Uncertain	Burial	4

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
2	Pottery	1	18g	Post-medieval	LSRW
2	Lead	1	16g	Unknown	Strip; ? Roofing lead
4	Pottery	1	11g	Post-medieval	TGE
4	Ceramic Building Material	1	6g	Post-medieval	Brick frag
6	Ceramic Building Material	1	73g	Post-medieval	Roof tile frag
6	Animal Bone	2	64g	Unknown	Mammal remains
18	Ceramic Building Material	1	28g	Post-medieval	Roof tile frag
18	Human Skeletal Remains	1	5g	Unknown	
19	Iron	1	22g	Late Saxon	Knife blade
22	Pottery	1	8g	Late Saxon	THET
22	Glass	1	150g	Modern	Jar; DISCARDED
26	Pottery	1	28g	Post-medieval	GRE
26	Ceramic Building Material	1	41g	Post-medieval	Roof tile frag
26	Flint – ?Struck	1	2g	Unknown	Flake
26	Glass	1	1g	Med./Post-Med.	Window frag
23	Iron	1	130g	Post-medieval	?Coffin furniture

Appendix 2b: OASIS Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Late Saxon	Iron	1
	Pottery	1
Med./Post-Med.	Glass	1
Post-medieval	Ceramic Building Material	4
	Iron	1
	Pottery	3
Modern	Glass	1
Uncertain	Animal Bone	2
	Flint – ?Struck	1
	Human Skeletal Remains	1
	Lead	1